



Our Ref: CDL/1970

Rt Hon Lord McFall of Alcluith
Senior Deputy Speaker
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

25 July 2018

Dear Lord McFall

Following your request earlier this year that the Interparliamentary Forum on Brexit be kept informed of intergovernmental activity, I am pleased to provide here an update on engagement and meetings that have taken place since our last exchange on 26 March.

Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations)

Since March I have chaired three further constructive meetings of the Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) (JMC(EN)) on 2 May, 22 June and 5 July.

At the most recent meeting on 5 July, Robin Walker provided an update on negotiations, a full overview of June European Council and an update on further progress on the Future Relationship White Paper. The Committee also discussed the UK Government's proposals for the forthcoming Withdrawal Agreement and Implementation Bill. It is my intention to reconvene JMC(EN) in September following summer recess and that the Committee continue to meet regularly as we draw closer to exit day.

At the meeting on 22 June, we provided the First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, and the now Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations, Mike Russell, with an update on the priorities for the June European Council. Robin Walker provided an update on progress on the Future Relationship White Paper, and led a discussion on increased engagement around operational readiness.

Discussion at the meeting on 2 May included an update on negotiations and March European Council and the agreement reached on the terms of the Implementation Period. The Committee discussed the UK Government's paper on the Devolved Administrations' role in the Negotiations as well as the EU (Withdrawal) Bill. The Committee also noted the need for continued engagement on common frameworks.

Ministerial Forum (EU Negotiations)

At the meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) (JMC(EN)) on 2 May 2018 the UK Government proposed additional engagement with the devolved administrations in the

next phase of negotiations, including the creation of a new Ministerial Forum on EU Negotiations (MF(EN)), chaired by the Minister for the Constitution Chloe Smith and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Exiting the EU Robin Walker.

The MF(EN) builds on the UK Government's commitment to engaging with the devolved administrations as we leave the EU, by ensuring they have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the UK negotiating line in advance of negotiations with the EU in areas which intersect with the devolution settlements or have a significant impact on the devolved nations. The MF(EN) will meet regularly over the summer and beyond to cover issues relating to the future partnership.

In parallel, technical sessions at official level are taking place to discuss negotiation topics relating to the future partnership with the EU. These technical sessions provide an opportunity for UKG and the DAs to discuss a range of negotiation options on specific issues. These discussions will highlight policy areas and issues to be covered at future MF(EN)s.

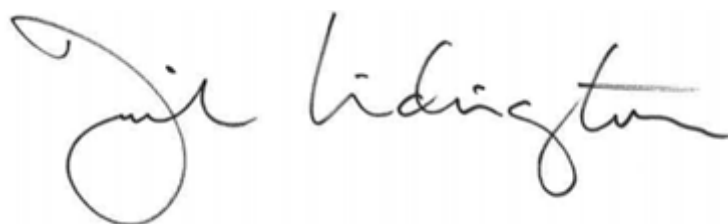
The first MF(EN) met in Edinburgh on 24 May 2018 and was a constructive meeting. This Ministerial Forum focused on the Future Relationship White Paper, as well as how the Ministerial Forum would work in practice. Complementing existing Inter-Governmental Relations architecture, MF(EN) will use the JMC(EN)'s terms of reference and will provide an important space to share our respective views. Where differences exist, political discussions will be fed up to JMC(EN). We held the second meeting of this new Ministerial Forum on 27 June in Westminster, again focusing on the publication of the White Paper. The forum will next meet in Cardiff on 1 August.

British-Irish Council

The 30th Summit of the British-Irish Council (BIC) was held on 22 June, hosted by the Government of Guernsey. The main discussion items at the Summit meeting focussed on marine environment issues and latest political developments, including EU Exit and the political situation in Northern Ireland. The next BIC Summit will be held on 9 November 2018, hosted by the Government of the Isle of Man.

In addition to engaging through these formal structures, I continue to speak regularly with my counterparts in the devolved administrations to take stock of progress of ongoing joint working in areas of shared interest.

I do hope this information is of interest to the Forum and will prove useful in facilitating discussion at future meetings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Lidington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the name.

Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP